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The Re-Establishment of the Austrian Railways

Introduction

"The considerable difficulties and delays encountered by the Four Powers in the negotiations in respect of the Peace Treaty with Austria and the atmosphere of despondency overhanging Central European affairs have, unfortunately, largely over-shadowed the very considerable progress achieved in the re-establishment of the Austrian Railways as an independent unified system, and in the restoration of train service and facilities for passenger and freight traffic. These tasks have had to be undertaken in the face of immense political and economic difficulties-especially those arising from the quadrupartite division and occupation of the country-and of acute shortages of materials and equipment, and with a staff frequently inadequately clothed and suffering from varying degrees of undernourishment. In the circumstances, an objective review of the problems involved and the progress achieved by Dr. Johann Hoffman, Austrian Ministerial Councillor (Ministerialrat), Vienna, which has been published in the semi-official Bulletin of the Central Office for International Railway Traffic (Zeitschrift für den Internationalen Eisenbahnverkehr), Bern, is particularly opportune. It is felt that the story of the Austrian Railways since the collapse of Germany, in the spring of 1945, is worthy of record and contains features likely to be of interest of railway administrations generally.

"It may be recalled that prior to the Anschluss, in March, 1938, when Austria was incorporated into the German Reich, and the Austrian Federal Railways merged into the German Railway (Reichsbahn), all the railways in Austria, except for a number of purely local railways, which had retained their independence, had been operated by the Austrian Federal Railways (Osterreichische Bundesbahnen). This is a specially constituted semi-autonomous undertaking established in 1923, following the investigation, by the late Sir William Acworth, for the operation as a single system, in the national interest and on a commercial basis, of the entire railway system, including both the state-owned lines and those of the

2

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-2-

former companies, certain of which, in fact, continued in existence as financial entities. The Austrian Federal Railways, which had their own Board of Directors, were managed by the headquarters (Generaldirektion) in Vienna, which was responsible for matters of policy and executive decisions affecting the entire system, and by four Federal Railway Divisional Managements (Bundesbahndirektionen), in Vienna, Villach, Linz and Innsbruck, which were responsible for the day-to-day executive management and operation of all lines in their respective areas.

"After the Anschluss, the Austrian Federal Railways were quickly and ruthlessly Germanised, German organisation and methods being introduced with all possible speed. The Headquarters (Generaldirektion), which, according to German principles was too centralised, was first reduced to a Liquidating Office for Austria (Abwicklungsstelle Österreich) and then disbanded, control being transferred to the German Ministry of Transport (Reichsverkehrsministerium), in Berlin. The Federal Railway Divisional Managements (Bundesbahndirektionen) at Vienna, Linz and Villach were raised to the status of German Railway Divisional Managements (Reichsbahndirektionen); that at Innsbruck was disbanded, the lines formerly under its control being divided between the Reichsbahndirektionen at Augsburg, Linz, Munich and Villach. The Germans instituted their own system of District Offices-Commercial (Verkehrsämter), Civil Engineering and Operating (Bau-und Betriebsämter) and Locomotives and Rolling Stock (Maschinenämter)-interposed between the Divisional Managements and the stations; under the Austrian organisation, the stations reported direct to the Divisional Managements.

"In addition to this administrative re-organisation, the Austrian passenger fares and freight rates systems were replaced by the German systems, and consequent on the replacement of the Austrian Schilling by the German Mark as the unit of currency in Austria, all finances were put on a Mark basis. German operating and commercial policy, and German methods, rules and regulations were all introduced. A big programme of new construction and improvement works, embracing all parts of the Austrian Federal Railways, was, at once, put in hand, and energetically pushed forward, in order to bring the system up to German standards and to increase its capacity to deal with the increases in traffic anticipated under the German plans for the economic and industrial development of Austria, and for strategical expansion towards South-Eastern Europe. When the Allied armies crossed the Austrian frontier on 30th March, 1945, from several directions, the German railway organisation there was already disintegrating. In addition, Allied air attacks, German demolitions and the fighting caused extensive damage to stations, yards, bridges, locomotive depots and other installations. Also, Austria was a veritable "graveyard" of locomotives and rolling stock of all nationalities, which the Germans had evacuated there as their armies retreated on all fronts. In contrast with other parts of Europe, for example, Holland, from which nearly all rolling stock had been withdrawn, Austria was cluttered up with rolling stock, much of which, however, was in a wrecked or damaged condition; moreover, those units in a serviceable condition often could not be moved owing to track damage and destroyed bridges. It was from this state of complete administrative and physical chaos, and with the country under the occupation of the four Powers and divided into four Zones, between which movement and trade were virtually impossible, that the task of the re-establishment and reconstruction of the Austrian Railways had to be begun.

Administrative, Staff, and Financial Arrangements

"Administrative Re-organization: On April 19th, 1945, one week after the Russian occupation of Vienna, those members of the Vienna Divisional Management who had stayed at their posts, together with the representatives of the station and other staff in the Vienna area, established, with the approval of the Russian Occupation Authorities, a new administration, named the Railway Management, Vienna (Eisenbahndirektion, Wien), which undertook the operation of the railways in the Russian Zone-the Provinces of Burgenland and Lower Austria.

"In the British Zone-the Provinces of Carinthia and Styria-the railways were placed under the former Villach Divisional Management. The railways in the American Zone-the Provinces of Upper Austria and Salzburg-were placed under the former Linz Divisional Management. In the French Zone, which comprised the Provinces of Tyrol and Vorarlberg and correspond roughly to the territory of the former Innsbruck Divisional Management, which had been disbanded by the Germans in 1938, a Railway Management was re-established at Innsbruck to operate all lines in the Zone. Thus, in effect, four entirely separate and independent

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-3-

Railway Managements (Eisenbahndirektionen) were established by the Allied Military Authorities, one in each of the four Divisions of the former Austrian Federal Railways. Each of these Railway Managements assumed responsibility for operating the lines in the respective Zones, which correspond very largely, though not precisely, to the systems previously operated from the same centres, as an independent railway and subject to the instruction of the appropriate Occupying Power. Following the issue, in June, 1945, of a Decree covering certain transitional arrangements, the Vienna Railway Management (Eisenbahndirektion) assumed, in July, 1945, the title of General Managements (Generaldirektion), but, in practice, its authority frequently still did not extend beyond the Russian Zone.

"The Allied Control Council for Austria, on its establishment in the Summer of 1945, set up a Transport Committee, composed of representatives of the four Powers and charged with the duty of examining and formulating a solution for the Austrian transport problem. On 1st November, 1945, by an Order of the Allied Control Council, a new Railway General Management (Generaldirektion) was established in Vienna, with responsibility for the management and operation of the entire Austrian railway system as a unified undertaking, subject to the direction and control of the Occupation Powers: the four Railway Managements (Eisenbahndirektionen), in Vienna, Innsbruck, Linz, and Villach, reverted to their former status of Divisional Managements.

"Thus, from 1st November, 1945, the Austrian Railways were again constituted as an independent and unified system, known as the Austrian State Railways (Oesterreichische Staatseisenbahnen). The details of the new administrative organisation were set out in the first issue of the Official Gazette (Amtsblatt) of the Austrian State Railways, published on 10th January, 1946. This provides for a General Management (Generaldirektion), in Vienna responsible for all matters of policy and executive action involving the entire system, and for four State Railway Divisional Managements (Staatseisenbahndirektionen), in Vienna, Innsbruck, Linz and Villach, responsible for the day-to-day management and operation of the lines in their respective territories. The new internal organisation is basically similar to that in force on the former Austrian Federal Railways prior to the Anschluss, but certain changes have been made in the lines controlled by the Divisions to enable them to coincide with the Zones of Occupation. The District Offices set up by the Germans have been disbanded, and the stations report once again direct to the Divisional Managements. The General Management in Vienna, is under the direction and control of the Allied Control Council, exercised through its Directorate of Transport, and the Divisional Managements, in addition to the control exercised by the General Management in Vienna, are subject to direction and control by the Occupying Powers in their respective Zones.

"The relationship of the Austrian State Railways to the Austrian Government and the new internal organisation were formalised by a Decree issued by the Federal Minister of Transport (Bundesminister für Verkehr) on 8th June, 1946, and published in the Official Gazette (Amtsblatt) of the Austrian State Railways on 20th July, 1946. Under this Decree, the General Management of the Austrian State Railways (Generaldirektion der Oesterreichischen Staatseisenbahnen) forms Division 11 (Sektion 11) of the Federal Ministry of Transport (Bundesministerium für Verkehr). This Division is under the supervision of a Director-General, assisted by two Deputy Director-Generals, and is divided into eight Principal Departments (Gruppen), as follows: General Secretariat; Staff; Finance and Accounting; Legal and Administrative; Commercial; Operating; Civil Engineering; and Mechanical Engineering, with, in all, 37 Sections (Abteilungen). In addition, there are certain separate Special Departments responsible for particular spheres, namely, Medical, Stores and Electrification.

"The relationship of the Austrian State Railways to the State is fundamentally different from that of the Austrian Federal Railways; whereas the latter was a semi-autonomous undertaking with its own Board of Management and subject only to the supervision of the Ministry of Transport as the regulatory authority, under the new set-up, the Ministry of Transport and the Railway Managements are, in effect, one and the same. Under the Decree of June, 1946, the Austrian Government also became the regulatory authority for all private railways, and the Federal Ministry of Transport (Bundesministerium für Verkehr), thereby became the controlling authority for all railways in Austria, in practice, the powers

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-4-

over the independent railways were delegated to Division 11 of the Ministry, which, as already pointed out, forms the General Management of the Austrian State Railways. Thus, the independent railways, of which there are 25, are in effect, under the supervision of the Austrian State Railways; they are, however, being encouraged to retain their identity, and, coincident with the Decree of June, 1946, arrangements were made for the re-establishment of the Association of Austrian Private Railways (Verband der Osterreichischen Privatbahnunternehmungen)-an association which formerly existed to protect the joint interests of these railways, but which had been suppressed by the Germans in 1938.

"Staff: The staff problem has been one of exceptional difficulty and delicacy. Thus, in 1936, the staff of the Austrian State Railways totalled no less than 93,000 compared with 57,000 employed by the Austrian Federal Railways in 1938; moreover, in 1946, traffic was, on the whole, considerably below the 1938 level. This increase in staff was due to a combination of circumstances, including, inter alia, the big increase in railway facilities and capacity created by the Germans, the heavy traffic during the war years, the large numbers now engaged on the clearance of war damage and on reconstruction work, and to the low output of work at the present time owing to the very difficult living conditions. In spite of this admitted excess of staff, it has been considered necessary, in order to maintain the requisite standards, to develop staff training facilities. Amongst the staff receiving instruction in 1946 were 760 telephone operators, 850 traffic staff, 100 permanent way men and some 1,800 engineering apprentices; the latter were spread over 18 workshops.

"A particularly difficult problem has been the sorting out of the German and Austrian staff, as, during the period 1938-45, staff were transferred in both directions between Germany and Austria. The de-nazification of the Austrian staff has been a very delicate question, owing to the necessity of giving effect to political considerations while avoiding a decline in efficiency through the loss of too many qualified staff. It appears that there have been marked variations in the policies and criteria adopted, and in the progress achieved, in the different Zones.

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Reconstruction

"Trains and Tracks: The following data afford some indication of the extent of the war damage, of the magnitude of the task of reconstruction and of the considerable progress achieved by the autumn of 1946. Thus, at the time of the German collapse, in April, 1945, out of 6,048 route-km. (3,758 miles) of line subsequently taken over by the Austrian State Railways, 2,507 route-km. (1,558 miles) were either destroyed or so damaged that they could not be used for traffic. By September, 1946, working was again possible on all but 106 route-km. (66 miles) of line. Out of a total of 6,078 bridges, 381, with a total length of 24,704 metres (22,016 yards) and including most of the major structures, were destroyed. By September, 1946, all but 43, with a length of 1,938 metres (2,119 yards), had been either rebuilt or replaced by temporary structures.

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Bridges already re-opened by the autumn of 1946 included the following: that on the Vienna-Prague main-line over the Danube outside Vienna-Nordwestbahnhof, which, by the use of a military bridge, was reopened for single-track working on 28th August, 1946, and so provided the first route for north-south traffic across the Danube; that on the Vienna-Prague main-line over the Danube, at Tulln; those carrying the Vienna-Bratislava (Polish-Russian) main-line over the Danube, at Vienna-Stadlau and over the Danube Canal at Vienna-Erdbergerlande; that carrying the (Paris) Innsbruck-Vienna main-line over the Inn, at Brixlegg; that over the Inn, at Braunau; that over the Mur, near Spelfeld; and that carrying the Vienna-Trieste main-line over the Gail, at Arnoldstein. The re-opening of these bridges enabled the main north-south and east-west international routes across Austria to be again available for traffic.

"In regard to turntables, out of 141 on the system, 44 were completely destroyed; by September, 1946, 23 of these had been replaced, and usually the opportunity was taken to install a longer table than the original, in order to prepare for the introduction of larger locomotives. At many locations, particularly in stations and yards, reconstruction work was complicated by the necessity of restoring the overhead electric wiring, so as to permit of the resumption of electric traction. The whole task, difficult enough in itself, was greatly aggravated by the administrative chaos and by the political, economic and labour problems already referred to. The Austrian State Railways have paid tribute to the considerable assistance rendered by the Occupying Powers in their respective Zones, especially in the early stages and in the provision of plant, tools, equipment and materials. The Austrian State Railways estimate that, by the end of September, 1946, their own staff had spent some 30,560,000 man-hours, exclusive of administrative and supervisory work, on the reconstruction of Ways and Works.

"Locomotives: At the end of 1937, the Austrian Federal Railways possessed, including the narrow-gauge stock, in round figures, 1,900 steam locomotives, 250 electric locomotives and motor coaches, 80 internal combustion engine railcars, or, in all, some 2,230 motive power units. In general, about 23 per cent. of this stock was under or awaiting repair and some 74 million locomotives-kilometres (some 46 million miles) were run per annum.

"There was, on a numerical basis, ample motive power in relation to the reduced level of traffic, in the years immediately preceding the Anschluss, and, in fact, a considerable number of engines were in storage. Nevertheless, many of the steam locomotives were old and there was a multiplicity of types, dating back to the individual railways of the pre-1914-18 Austro-Hungarian Empire. In spite of the introduction of a small number of modern powerful steam locomotives of notable design, by the Austrian Federal Railways, the stringent financial position had rendered impossible the carrying out of the modernisation and standardisation programme demanded by technical considerations.

"The Austrian State Railways considered, in 1946, that, on a statistical basis, the number of tractive units on the system represented a surplus of motive power of 35 per cent; yet the stock was in such a damaged or neglected condition, that the number actually available for use, and the locomotive mileage run, was only about 50 per cent. of that before the war. Moreover, the multiplicity of types was, owing to the non-Austrian stock in the country, even greater than before the war, which, inevitably, complicated the repair problem.

"Orders have been placed, as a matter of urgency, for a number of steam locomotives for working heavy freight trains; eight were delivered by the autumn of 1946. The placing of further orders for steam locomotives will depend on the outcome of the allocation by the Allies of the locomotives in Austria, and on the progress of the electrification schemes referred to later. Consideration is also being given to the adoption of diesel locomotives, as these would use oil from the Austrian fields at Sistersdorf, which were very considerably developed during the war, and thereby reduce coal imports, always a difficult problem in Austria. Moreover, it is felt diesel locomotives may be more economical than steam locomotives.

"Fuel Problem and Conversion of Locomotives to Oil-burning: As already indicated, the supply of locomotive coal has been one of the most difficult problems facing the Austrian State Railways since the war. In the French Zone-Vorarlberg and Tyrol-electric traction, based on hydro-electric power, has enabled reasonably adequate service to be maintained, except for a cut of 40 per cent. in locomotive mileage at the close of 1946, necessitated by the drought. In the American and British Zones, the local production of lignite

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

-7-

has eased the position and avoided the complete dependence on coal imports. The position has been most critical in the Russian Zone, where none of these alleviating circumstances was available. In this Zone, by the spring of 1946, 160 steam locomotives had been converted to partial or complete oil-burning, a measure which was estimated to save the coal equivalent to 250 tons of fuel oil per day. In spite of these measures, the shortage of fuel necessitated, at the close of 1946, a reduction of 70 per cent. in steam locomotive mileage.

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"At the present time, there are very many more vehicles in Austria than before the war; yet, barely half of the vehicles in the country are in a usable condition and the greater part of the stock is, in one way or another, defective. The acute shortage of tools and materials, and the labour problem, are making repair work very slow.

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"Train Services: Taking the system as a whole, there was a progressive improvement in train services during the first nine months of 1946, before the shortage of coal and hydro-electric power in the late autumn necessitated such drastic cuts. Thus, the train mileage almost doubled during the period, rising from 1,739,000 train-kilometres (915,000 passenger and 818,000 freight) in January to no less than 3,068,000 train-kilometres (1,852,000 passenger and 1,216,000 freight) in September. The increase was, however, very unevenly divided between the Divisions. Thus, in so far as passenger train-kilometres were concerned, in May, the figure for the entire system was 49 per cent. of the monthly average in 1937; yet, in the Innsbruck Division, which is entirely electrically operated and where the greatest progress was achieved, the May, 1946, figure was 65 per cent. of that for 1937, while in the Vienna Division, which is entirely steam-operated and where the coal problem is most acute, the May, 1946, mileage was only 36 per cent. of that in 1937. In regard to freight traffic, the total train-mileage, including military traffic, in May, 1946, was 66 per cent. of the monthly average in 1937. The figures varying from the high one of 90 per cent. in the Linz Division (American Zone) down to between 50 per cent. and 71 per cent. in the other Divisions. Perhaps the best indication of work done is that provided by the gross-ton-kilometre figure; in May, 1946, the figure, passenger and freight, for the entire system was 70 per cent. of the monthly average for 1937. It is clear that a very substantial measure of recovery had been achieved, in spite of all the difficulties. On a qualitative basis, however, services for both passenger and freight traffic are much below pre-war standards. Trains are much slower, both owing to slower running; and to time spent in formalities at Zonal frontiers, which for several months were more difficult to cross than the national frontiers; delays are more frequent; rolling stock is in a poor condition; and overcrowding is more common. Thus, in 1946, on the average, each passenger train carried 50 per cent. more passengers than in 1937, while the average freight train load was 10 per cent. higher.

"The first important international express to be restored was the Arlberg Express, which, on 28th September, 1945, began to run between Paris and Innsbruck three times per week, and, following the re-opening of the bridge over the Inn at Brixlegg, on 13th October, was extended to Vienna. On 15th October, 1945, a through service, four times per week was introduced between (Strasbourg) Lindau and Vienna. The first service between Vienna (East) and Budapest was restored, on

RESTRICTED

-3-

alternative days, commencing 10th September, 1945, while the service between Vienna (Nordwest) and Prague (Wilson) via Gmund was restored-three times per week on 8th January, 1946, and soon afterwards increased to a daily basis. The 8th January, 1946, also saw the introduction of a thrice-weekly service, with sleeping cars, between Paris and Prague, the vehicles running on the Arlberg Express between Paris and Linz. On 2nd April, the Orient Express was restored between Paris and Linz on three days per week. In August, 1946, the Arlberg-Orient Express, the Orient Express and the Vienna-Prague Express, were all restored to run daily.

"The progress in the restoration of internal services has varied considerably in the different Zones, according, inter alia, to the progress of reconstruction, work and to the availability of fuel. On 1st October, 1945, ordinary passenger traffic was resumed between Vienna and the south (British Zone) and between Vienna and the West (American and French Zones). In addition to the international trains, a service of semi-fast trains was introduced to cover the needs of long-distance internal travellers over the following main-lines: Vienna-Schnorring-Villach and Graz; Linz-Salzburg-Bad Gastein-Villach; Linz-Selzthal-Graz, with through coaches to and from Innsbruck and Salzburg. The Austrian State Railways are being strongly pressed to provide considerably improved services, by the Austrian public, who, after the restrictions of the war years, are longing to travel again. Yet, in spite of the progress made with reconstruction, the acute shortage of fuel and the serious lack of serviceable passenger coaches render any material improvement in services impossible at the present time.

Electrification

"The acute shortage of coal and the considerable hydro-electric power resources in Austria have led the Austrian State Railways to decide to press forward with a large programme for further electrification, for which plans were prepared some years before the war, though the work was held up by economic considerations. At the time of the Anschluss, out of the 5,923 route-km. (3,680 miles) then operated by the Austrian Federal Railways, 914 route-km. (568 miles), or 15.6 per cent. of the entire system, were electrified. Except for some lines in the Vienna area and the narrow gauge St. Pölten Mariazell line, the whole of the electrification, in common with German and Swiss practice, was on the 15,000 volt AC. single-phase, 16-2/3 cycles, system, with overhead feed. The electrification was mainly in the West (Innsbruck Division) and included the Arlberg main-line (Swiss frontier at Salzburg); the Brenner main-line (Kufstein-Innsbruck-Brenner); the Tauern line (Salzburg-Bad Gastein-Spittal Millstättersee) and the Austrian sections of the Mittenwald line (Innsbruck-Mittenwald and Griesen-Reutte). Work was then in hand on the conversion of the Salzburg-Attnang Puchheim section-50 km. (44 miles)-of the Salzburg-Vienna main-line, which was completed by the Germans in 1940.

"The new scheme provides for conversion of a further 1,981 route-km. (1,230 miles) involving approximately 4,000 track-km. (2,485 miles). Further details of the scheme are available if required, but in essence, it provides for the conversion of all the main lines and of a number of secondary routes as well, so that on its completion, planned for 1958, half the entire system and 75 per cent. of the total traffic will be electrically worked. The scheme is in three main stages, as follows: 1946-49, 499 route km. (310 miles); 1950-53 769 route km. (478 miles) and 1954-57, 713 route-km. (443 miles). It is hoped to carry out the conversion at a rate of 150 to 200 route-km. (93 to 125 miles) per annum.

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The scheme will necessitate the erection of 1,000 km. (620 miles) of transmission lines, the construction of 28 electric sub-stations and the acquisition of 600 electric traction units. It is proposed to construct only the following standard type of traction unit; a heavy express passenger, a heavy freight, a mixed traffic, a railcar and a shunting locomotive. The whole electrification programme is to be the subject of close co-operation with Austrian industry so that the work may be planned and the orders allocated in relation to manufacturing capacity, and all interest concerned can be in a position to make reasonable long-term plans.

"In 1946, work was put in hand on the following short sections: Spittal Millstättersee-Villach, 36 route-km. (22 miles); Attnang Puchheim-Linz, 55 route-km. (34 miles); and Bischofshofen-Eben, 17 route km. (11 miles). These are all short extensions of sections already electrified, the completion of which will considerably facilitate operating and lead to a much better locomotive user.

RESTRICTED

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-9-

"There seems no doubt that, in common with many other Continental European railways, for instance, the French, Belgian, Dutch and Italian, the Austrian State Railways, in spite of their wartime experience of air attack and the problem of restoring electric working, have great faith in electrification and have adopted a large scale programme of conversion, at high capital cost, as the main feature of their post-war development plans.

Conclusion

"It is hoped that these notes will have drawn attention to some of the problems encountered and the solutions adopted by the Austrian State Railways in re-establishing and reconstructing their system out of the administrative and physical chaos prevailing at the time of the German collapse in April, 1945. A great effort has been made in the most adverse circumstances imaginable, and, despite the many unsatisfactory features and the long way still to go, truly remarkable progress has been achieved. The following statement by the Director General of the Austrian State Railways, at the close of 1945, indicated his faith in the future:

"After long and terrible years, our country is going to live to enjoy better days, when honest work will, once again, bring its rewards. If this hope is realised, the Austrian State Railways will once again be restored to their pride of place as the country's principal transport system, meeting in an exemplary way all the needs of Austrian economy."

"It appears that, in Austria, as in so many other countries, the stage has already been reached where the progress of recovery and the ability of the railways to improve their services are being limited by factors entirely outside the control of the railway administration. The Austrian railwaymen, with that fine tradition so common amongst railwaymen, are only awaiting the return of political stability and the availability of the necessary material resources to enable them to proceed with the work of reconstruction and to produce that standard of service which they know is technically possible."

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